

Remarks of Kevin Egan
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Waterbury
Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, Section 30
Teacher Salaries and Certification

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon, Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Kevin Egan, and I'm a third grade teacher in Waterbury, and president of the Waterbury Teachers Association. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 31. As many of the more than 1,500 teachers of Waterbury will also attest to, we were quite shocked when reading the components of Senate Bill 24. Where do I begin with an oversized 163 page document that attempts to reform education, but yet seems to be so undersized on any proven substance?

After a decade of suffering from the unfunded promises of No Child Left Behind and realizing that the law has been a total disaster, now Connecticut wants to continue to place a high priority on high stakes standardized test scores by tying them to evaluation, and subsequently employing draconian measures to tie evaluation to certification. Teachers know that testing should be used for diagnostic purposes, to help students and teachers, but instead, it has turned into a deadly weapon that is used to punish teachers and schools. As Diane Ravitch states, who once spoke in favor of the types of reform contained in SB 24, "Judging teachers by test scores demoralizes teachers and will lead to narrowing of the curriculum—so that the districts where children have the lowest scores will have more time for test preparation and less time for the arts, less time for history or civics, less time for science, less time for physical education. The children who need a great education the most will get the least. The entire current reform movement rests on a fanatical belief in standardized testing. Yet testing experts warn us that the tests should be used for diagnostic purposes, not to fire teachers and close schools.

The basic rule of testing is that a test should be used only for the purpose for which it was designed. A test of fifth grade reading tests whether students can read at a fifth grade level; it is not a test of teacher quality. Testing experts warn that tests are subject to statistical error and measurement error. One thing we know for certain about standardized testing. Poor and minority kids consistently get lower test scores than white and privileged kids. So why would we make testing the most important measure of education? Why would we take the technology that is most discouraging to children in the bottom half and then insist that it matters more than anything else? Why would we give more credibility to standardized tests than to teachers' and parents' judgments about children's potential?" The PEAC council has called for evaluation to be reliable, valid, fair and useful, but yet nothing in SB 24 seems to accommodate any one of these four requirements. We also know that the evaluation framework is not complete, and several issues in it have yet to be defined. We need legislation that promotes strong collaboration between all stake holders. Let's not rush into a system of school reform that we know is not going to work, just for the sake of saying we are now instituting school reform. I would urge this committee and your fellow legislators to vote this bill down and avoid the unmistakable embarrassment of signing a bill that will do absolutely nothing for the achievement

gap and do everything for the corporate reformers and billionaires who have raided our state on the backs of our teachers in the hopes of unimaginable profits. Thank You.